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FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4926
INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE
RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0337

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 000953

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DEPT FOR WHA/CAR - RANDALL BUDDEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/19/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [SNAR](#) [ASEC](#) [KCOR](#) [KCRM](#) [JM](#) [XL](#)
SUBJECT: JAMAICA: MOUNTING POLITICAL TENSIONS WITH APPROACH
OF NATIONAL ELECTIONS

REF: A. KINGSTON 588 (241258 APR 07)(NOTAL)

[1](#)B. KINGSTON 609 (271130Z APR 07)

[1](#)C. KINGSTON 803 (241630Z MAY 07)

Classified By: Charge' Edward J. Wehrli, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary and Analysis

1.(C) A shooting and other alleged untoward incidents over recent weeks betoken mounting tensions in the run-up to national elections, which must be held by the end of the year. A return to the large-scale orchestrated political violence of the 1980 contest seems unlikely, as all of the country's leading political figures appear genuinely to have renounced such tactics. However, with the approach of what promises to be Jamaica's closest and most intense electoral struggle in decades, their ability to constrain grass-roots activists and the country's politically affiliated criminal gangs remains an open question. The risk: that isolated acts of random violence in closely contested "swing" districts might escalate and then spiral out of control.
End Summary and Analysis.

Shooting Incident

2.(U) In the most serious incident to date, four persons suffered minor wounds when shots were fired into a van transporting supporters of the opposition Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) to a rally in Swallowfield. The shooting occurred in the hotly contested constituency of South East St. Andrew as the vehicle passed through Woodford Park, a known stronghold of the ruling People's National Party (PNP).

Conflicting accounts have emerged, with some reports alleging that a policeman residing in the area first was fired upon by persons in the vehicle, and then returned fire.

Police reportedly have detained two persons for questioning.

3.(U) Both the Member of Parliament for the constituency, Minister of Education Maxine Henry-Wilson, and her outspoken JLP opponent, Joan Gordon-Webley, have condemned the incident and appealed for calm on all sides. JLP General Secretary Karl Samuda has claimed the incident was politically motivated, asserting in a letter to the Political Ombudsman, Bishop Herro Blair, that it "reflects the determination of the PNP to remain in power at any cost." For his part, PNP General Secretary Donald Buchanan has maintained that "the People's National Party is well on their way to victory, and the public opinion polls indicate that we are opening up a larger lead over the JLP. Why would we want to engage in any form of political violence?"

Other Alleged Breaches of Political Code of Conduct

4.(U) Bishop Blair met with Samuda and other leading figures from both parties on June 18 to discuss a number of other recent alleged breaches of the Political Code of Conduct, to include:

-- stoning of a vehicle carrying PNP supporters to a rally in Junction, St. Elizabeth;

-- defacing and/or damaging of political billboards in the South East St. Elizabeth and North Trelawny constituencies;

-- unlawful or provocative behavior associated with political motorcades in several parishes.

Wehrli